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AUTHOR Williams, Jerome A.
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ABSTRACT

The Basic Skills Assessment Act (631) is a law passed by the South Carolina General Assembly in 1978 which established the Basic Skills Assessment Program. This law requires the establishment of statewide educational objectives for reading, writing, and mathematics for each grade level, kindergarten through grade 12. The law also requires that a readiness test be given at the beginning of the school year to every student entering the first grade. The purpose of this program is to improve the quality of instruction in the basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics. During 1981-82 the Southeastern Public Education Program conducted a project (Basic Skills Assessment Program - Parent Support Project) in South Carolina aimed at educating parents and other citizens about the Basic Skills Assessment Program. This report is an attempt to systematically review the monitoring process and the monitoring visits conducted in 1981-82 by the State Department of Education. It is also an attempt to provide information about the Basic Skills Assessment Program's implementation and the problems that school districts are encountering. (Author/PN)

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THE SOUTH CAROLINA BASIC SKILLS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

A DESCRIPTION OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S MONITORING PROCESS AND REPORTS

Jerome A. Williams
Project Associate
BSAP - Parent Support Project
Southeastern Public Education Program

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PREFACE

During 1981-1982 the Southeastern Public Education Program (SEPEP) conducted a project (Basic Skills Assessment Program - Parent Support Project) in South Carolina aimed at educating parents and other citizens about the Basic Skills Assessment Program.

This review and report was compiled as part of that project. The report is an attempt to systematically review the monitoring process and the monitoring visits conducted in 1981-1982 by the State Department of Education. This report is also an attempt to provide information about the Basic Skills Assessment Program's implementation and the problems that school districts are encountering.

This report is not an attempt to analyze or interpret the findings of the monitoring visits. It has been compiled from information contained in each monitoring report on file at the State Department of Education - Basic Skills Section.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my appreciation to the Basic Skills Section for their cooperation and efforts in providing necessary information and materials.

INTRODUCTION

The Basic Skills Assessment Act (631) is a law passed by the South Carolina General Assembly in 1978 which established the Basic Skills Assessment Program. This law requires the establishment of statewide educational objectives for reading, writing, and mathematics for each grade level, kindergarten through grade twelve. The law also requires that a readiness test be given at the beginning of the school year to every student entering the first grade. In addition, basic skills tests are given at the end of every school year (May) to all students in grades 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, and 11.

The purpose of this program is to improve the quality of instruction in the basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics. Test scores are to be used to identify students' strengths and weaknesses in the basic skills so teachers can focus instruction to help students overcome their weaknesses. By having clearly defined instructional targets, South Carolina teachers can design instructional programs which promote student mastery of these skills.

The South Carolina legislature, through passage of the Basic Skills Assessment Act, has placed certain responsibilities on the State Department of Education, as well as school districts, for ensuring that all pupils obtain basic communication and mathematics skills as they progress through the public school system. The role of the State Department of Education as related to the instructional provisions of the legislation requires monitoring and evaluation of the BSAP's implementation in each district. Section 8 of the Basic Skills Act states:

> "Section 8. The Department of Education shall take necessary administrative action to monitor and evaluate the curriculum and instruction methods in each school district, including on-site visits to selected schools, to insure compliance with the standards and purposes of this act."

Within the Office of General Education, the Basic Skills Section has primary responsibility for carrying out the intent of Act 631 in terms of monitoring and providing assistance in the instructional areas. In order that there be a consistent as well as an effective procedure for compliance with Section 8 of the Basic Skills Assessment Act, a monitoring plan has been developed and adopted by the State Board of Education. This design for monitoring is being used and will be adjusted as needed in the future.

THE MONITORING PROCESS

The monitoring plan developed by the Department seeks to ensure that potential educational benefits of the Basic Skills Assessment Program will be realized. Districts are reviewed to determine that existing financial and human resources necessary to provide basic skills instruction are being utilized, or to determine if some resources should be redirected to achieve the purposes of the BSAP.

The monitoring is accomplished through two basic strategies. First, a general assurance form (Appendix A) has been required to offer evidence of compliance in terms of district intent and planning. This assurance form carries the seven areas of responsibility charged to each district by the law. Second, on-site visits are made by evaluation teams to schools in selected districts at least once every three years. To date, some 47 school districts out of 92 school districts in the state have been monitored.

The monitoring team includes two people with expertise in each of the basic skills areas of language arts and mathematics who spend approximately one-half day in each school visited. The procedure for the monitoring is as follows:

(1) The superintendent of the district selected is notified approximately one month in advance of the visit by a letter (see Appendix B). This is followed about two weeks later by direct contacts (telephone) with the superintendents. The district superintendent then contacts all principals in the district.

(2) The visits begin with an interview with the school principal to learn his/her plan for implementation on-site.

(3) Interviews and observations of the instructional programs are conducted with a concentration on classroom activities. Contacts are made with Department Chairpersons in other content areas (science, social studies, etc.) at various grade levels to determine if teachers are familiar with the statewide objectives, have copies in their possession, and what utilization is being made of the objectives.

(4) Information regarding the use of the test data in diagnosing students' instructional needs and prescribing appropriate learning activities is obtained from each teacher interviewed.

(5) Attempts are made to determine that all teachers are familiar with the Basic Skills Assessment Program and have knowledge of the statewide objectives in reading, mathematics, and writing.

(6) On the final day of the monitoring in each district an exit conference is scheduled with the district superintendent or his designee, the principals of the schools monitored, and other appropriate personnel. The purpose of this conference is to validate the findings of thevisiting team and share general observations. This is an option of the school district.

(7) A written follow-up report for each district is sent to the district superintendent about 3 - 4 weeks after the visit. The report focuses on the individual schools visited. The

district superintendent is the only person who receives a copy of the report from the State Department of Education. The report requests that the superintendent share the findings and recommendations with the school principals and they in turn share the information with their staff. Anyone else can request copies of any of the reports under the Freedom of Information Act. The report contains:

a. An assessment of the overall degree of compliance with the mandates for BSAP implementation.

b. Specific recommendations which the visitation team feels will further contribute to successful implementation of the program.

c. Identification of resources, where needed, from both local and state sources which can be utilized in meeting specific needs identified during the monitoring visits.

When resources are identified but not readily available locally, the State Department of Education's services are made available to the extent possible (i.e., technical assistance in designing and/or conducting staff development activities.)

* See (Appendix C-1 to C-4) for sample copies of BSAP interview forms used by the Department of Education in conducting its monitoring visits.

BSAP MONITORING REPORTS FOR 1981-1982

The monitoring visits conducted during the 1981-1982 totaled 16 school districts. The following findings and analysis of the monitoring visits are based on a review of the written reports of the visits. The districts that were monitored, as in the previous year, were a fair representation of all the schools in South Carolina. Selected districts range from those which are very rural with only three schools to those which are inner city/urban with more than thirty schools. Monitoring reports evidence findings that the BSAP is being implemented to varying degrees. In most cases the reports showed that principals and teachers were trying to deal with BSAP implementation problems in various manners.

A general overview of the monitoring reports, however, shows there are principals and teachers who do not have a good understanding of the Basic Skills Assessment Program and its implementation. Record keeping procedures have been noted as a problem from the beginning of the BSAP's implementation. Findings this year again pointed to record-keeping as a major concern, so much so, in fact, that the State Department of Education undertook an elaborate study of the problem. The report "Findings of the Basic Skills Assessment Program Survey - Spring 1982" can be obtained from the State Department of Education. The problem stems from a requirement that teachers keep track of a student's progress in several skills and subskill areas. The problem is further compounded when districts/schools implement a new record-keeping system which has not been correlated with the state objectives for reading, writing, and mathematics or with actual classroom instruction. It is essential that districts correlate the state objectives to local curricula. If objectives or attendant subskills are not addressed, the local curricula should be supplemented accordingly. The objectives on which the test were based reflect South Carolinians' views on desired learning outcomes at each grade, and not necessarily what is currently being taught.

Consequently, there may, in some instances, be a lack of congruence among the tests and curriculum and instruction. Any such lack of agreement among curriculum and instruction and test content will possibly result in lower test scores.

A review of the monitoring reports also reveals a need for subject area teachers other than math, reading, and language arts to be more involved in the BSAP and its implementation. In most schools monitored, findings showed that teachers in other areas such as science and social studies are not being given any responsibility in implementing the basic skills program. Findings also evidenced a lack of correlation between other subject area curriculum and the BSAP objectives. Most subject areas offer opportunities for reinforcing the basic skills objectives. Along this same line is the involvement of Title I teachers and a lack of correlation of curriculum here also. In a lot of cases, Title I is used as a referral program for students who are eligible and who score below standard on the BSAP tests. In general there seems to be a need to correlate all curriculum with the BSAP objectives.

Informal diagnosis of students' skills presented various levels of frustration for upper grade teachers. Findings demonstrated many teachers' inability to formally/informally assess student's subskill progress which is needed in determining appropriate instruction. It should be emphasized that the results of the basic skills tests are diagnostic only in terms of broad objectives. Teachers will need to conduct further diagnosis to identify specific skill weaknesses with their students. Information reported from the testing will indicate relative strengths and weaknesses at the objective, but not at the subskill level. To provide diagnostic information to the subskill level would require that the tests be lengthened considerably. It would also require additional testing time for all students as well as increased costs for test development and scoring. The legislation is aimed at students who have deficiencies and are below minimum standards. The use of increased testing time for all students in order to

provide diagnostic information for those below standard does not appear warranted. There is no clearly defined writing program, especially across curriculum areas in the upper grades.

The placement of children (grouping) in the same class as a result of BSAP testing is evident across some schools. Since student placement or grouping should never be made based solely on one test or measure, it would be more appropriate to use already existing records, teacher observations, and other data to make decisions for students' placement.

Findings showed a need for more in-service training. At present school districts are required to provide a minimum of five days of staff development in order to qualify for state aid. In addition, districts are required by the Defined Minimum Program to annually submit a master plan for staff development that is continuous and goes beyond the five days mentioned. School districts are encouraged to include activities in their staff development plans which will assist classroom teachers in successfully implementing the Basic Skills Assessment Program. The specific needs voiced by teachers should definitely be considered in staff development planning.

And lastly, findings showed a need for more instructional materials. The Basic Skills Assessment Act does not provide state funds in addition to those provided through the provisions of the South Carolina Education Finance Act as funded by the annual Appropriations Bill. However, funds from a variety of sources (i.e., Chapters I and II, the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act, local revenue, Defined Minimum Program) can be utilized to purchase additional instructional resources.

A more detailed look at each district monitored during 1981-1982 is given below, along with a comparison chart showing commonalities among the findings.

1. Anderson School District #2 - Monitored on October 6, 7, 8, 1981. There were nine (9) monitoring team members who visited all schools in this district.

   Positive Findings: Findings showed that administrators were knowledgeable of the law (Act 631). In-service training had been provided for teachers.

   Negative Findings: At the time of the monitoring visit, no parent notifications had been sent for first graders scoring below 88 on the first grade readiness test (Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery - CSAB). In first grade there was little emphasis on developmental/concrete activities. Also noted was a lack of appropriate materials for teaching the 18 kindergarten objectives. In grades 2 - 8, teachers were implementing the BSAP mandate to varying degrees. Teachers provided with BSAP test results did better in planning and organizing instructional programs than teachers without the test results. A correlation of professional and instructional resources with the BSAP objectives was seen as a need. The CSAB scores seemed to be used for grouping of children. Teachers needed assistance in identifying specific deficiencies at subskill level. More use of the Teaching and Testing Manual was needed. In-service training for teachers in the writing process was not available.

2. Anderson School District #3 - Monitoring was conducted on October 8 and 9, 1981. There were three (3) monitoring team members who visited four (4) schools in this district.

   Negative Findings: In one school monitored, test results for grades 1, 2, 3, 6 and 8 for reading, mathematics, and writing were mistakenly sent to another school. The kindergarten had not keyed its curriculum to the BSAP objectives. The kindergarten curriculum was abstract in nature; it needed to be more developmental and concrete. Schools varied in the amount of instructional materials available. Middle grade teachers should have been maintaining class profiles for all sections they teach. The class

profile was used to record the profile of responses for each student and for the class as a whole. Sixth and eighth grade teachers had BSAP test data only on those students classified as repeaters. Some teachers were depending totally on textbooks to cover the BSAP objectives. Children were regrouped as a result of the first grade readiness test (CSAB) scores. Teachers of assigned children did not administer the CSAE test. Instructional, supplemental, and remediation materials were seen as a need. Teachers had not diagnosed deficiencies at subskill level. This is essential to pinpoint remediation areas.

3. Berkeley School District - Monitoring was conducted on March 16-18, 1982. There were nine (9) monitoring team members who visited twenty-three (23) schools in the district.

   Positive Findings: The kindergarten program used the Dial Screening Instrument along with the 18 kindergarten objectives to monitor student progress. Teachers seemed very knowledgeable of the objectives and the subskills. The Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery (the BSAP readiness test for children entering the first grade) test items were correlated to the Distar Reading and Math Programs in Title I.

   Negative Findings: More in-service training for newly hired staff was needed. There was no uniform writing program in evidence. Those teachers with no BSAP test data had no system to indicate where students were functioning. Teachers in science and social studies did not have an impact on basic skills. A correlation of the math program objectives with the BSAP objectives had not taken place. Supplementary materials were needed for the math program. In-service training was needed for the development of a writing program.

4. Charleston School District - Monitoring was conducted on April 27, 28, and 29, 1982. There were ten (10) monitoring team members who visited thirty (30) schools in this district. Two-member teams spent one-half day in each school.

Negative Findings: In schools with a high turnover rate because of military population, the CSAB testing was continued throughout the school year. It was more appropriate for schools to establish a last day of testing, preferably in late fall. Some elementary schools were experiencing problems with the county's record-keeping system in mathematics and language arts. The teachers needed more in-service training in the use of classroom learning centers. CSAB test results were not considered for planning in the kindergarten classes. Some schools were using an Organic Reading Program as opposed to a highly structured Pre-Reading Program.

In Title I schools, students scoring below 88 on the first grade readiness test were assigned to Title I math and reading. Coordination was needed between the Title I program and regular program. Regular program teachers had BSAP test results and Title I teachers had Title I test results. Some teachers (Title I) indicated they did not have access to the CSAB score reports. Responsibility for providing developmental activities to the "not ready" students had not been clearly delineated. Both teachers (Title I and Regular Program teacher) were responsibile for remediation. A correlation between the BSAP objectives and the math and language arts curriculum guides had not taken place. Teachers needed to utilize more resources to address all BSAP objectives. Some teachers were using the textbooks only. There was no clearly defined writing program at the elementary school level. Other subject area teachers (other than math

and language arts) at the middle school level had no responsibility for BSAP implementation. Science and social studies teachers were not reinforcing the BSAP objectives. Other subject area teachers did not have copies of the law or any other BSAP resources available. Record keeping in some elementary schools was creating duplication of efforts.

5. Darlington School District - Monitoring was conducted on October 20, 21, and 22, 1981. There were nine (9) monitoring team members who visited all schools in the district.

   Positive Findings: Some teachers were using the Individualized Language Arts (ILA) writing program. This was felt to be the most useful program for writing instruction across the state. Group activities were used for the "ready" students and individualized activities were used for the "not ready" students.

   Negative Findings: Principals were unaware of a district policy concerning the BSAP and continuous assessment. Teachers were not utilizing the learning centers approach. The district used ability grouping for placement/scheduling of students. Additional or supplementary materials were needed for the development of a remedial program. Teachers of 9th grade math could not recall seeing the Teaching and Testing manuals. There was no correlation of the teaching materials to the BSAP subskills. There was no established writing program in place. The record-keeping system had too many forms. The Curriculum guide, Yearbooks, was being used for instruction in the kindergarten and first grade. Activities were inappropriate for these groups. There were too many paper and pencil activities.

6. Dillon School District #3 - Monitoring was conducted on December 8 and 9, 1981. There were three (3) team members who visited three (3) schools.

Positive Findings: The district had Basic Skills liason representatives for math and language. Coordination between the Title I program and regular program had taken place. In-service training was planned for all teachers. There were two (2) classes, a regular first grade and a transitional class for all repeaters. The district had a tutorial program for math and language.

Negative Findings: Some record-keeping was duplicative. Few instructional materials and resources were found in the classrooms. There was no planning time for some teachers in language arts. Student load may have exceeded 135. High schools lacked remedial reading classes.

7. Florence School District #2 - Monitoring was conducted on November 4 and 5, 1981 by three (3) monitoring team members who visited four (4) schools. Administrators and teachers felt the BSAP was not in place at that time. This district made a special request for assistance in record-keeping, use of test results, and guidance in remediation.

   Negative Findings: Parent notification of students' test scores in the first grade was planned, but was not completed. There was no written district policy on the implementation of the BSAP. The district had not developed overall plan for implementation of the BSAP. A formal and informal assessment of students' subskills to determine instruction was meager. There was no district or school plan for the development of writing objectives. There was no continuous assessment policy. The Title I reading and math programs and the regular programs lacked appropriate coordination for students. The kindergarten program did not provide a learning centered approach for affective skill development as well as cognitive skill development.

8. Laurens School District #56 - Monitoring was conducted on November 9 - 11, 1981 by four (4) monitoring team members who visited all schools in the district.

Positive Findings: Kindergarten programs were using a learning center approach for skill development. Programs had correlated the textbooks with the BSAP objectives. Correlation had also taken place between the National Diffusion Network's Cognitively Oriented Pre-primary Experience Program (COPE) and the 18 kindergarten objectives. It was evident in the high schools that a great deal of emphasis is being placed on the BSAP. The district used the South Carolina Word List on an instructional level rather than on a grade level.

Negative Findings: Teachers were not well informed on attendant subskills. Teachers were confused about what information should be recorded on the Individualized Student Report sheets.

9. Marion School District #1 - Monitoring was conducted on November 2 and 3, 1981 by three (3) team members who visited four (4) schools.

   Positive Findings: The district had a network of communication with BSAP liason representatives for math and language. This network had promoted an awareness and involvement of principals and teachers. The CSAB testing of first graders was done using a staggered attendance approach. All parent notifications about test results were sent to parents. Also the school newspaper was used to notify parents about testing information. The district's language arts program had been correlated with the BSAP reading and writing objectives. A variety of instructional and educational materials was available.

   Negative Findings: The kindergarten checklists (an informal assessment of skills) were overlapping and duplicative. There was no correlation between the checklist and the BSAP objectives or the 18 kindergarten objectives. There was no clearly-defined writing program. The resource teachers did not have BSAP test information. The textbook was being used as the primary resource. In-service training was needed for development of a writing program and for methods of assessing writing.

10. Marion School District #4 - Monitoring was conducted on November 11, 1981 by three (3) monitoring team members who visited two (2) schools.

Positive Findings: A district wide record-keeping system had been initiated in reading and mathematics at appropriate grade levels. The district used the staggered attendance approach for CSAB testing during the first 15 days of school. All parents were sent notifications of test results and a letter of explanation. At two week intervals, letters were sent home to report student progress and to suggest activities for parents to use with the children. In the kindergarten program, informal assessment of readiness objectives were occuring through learning center activities. The Boechm-Slater profile card was being used to record the profile of responses for each child and for the class as a whole. Written instructional plans for teaching the readiness objectives were evident. In reading and math, class profiles and district profiles and prescription sheets had begun to be used. Plans for remediation were being formulated.

Negative Findings: First grade teachers had not yet begun to assess the six (6) readiness objectives measured by teacher observation. Some teachers expressed concern about completing the "date of mastery" section on the BSAP profile and prescription sheets. This section is completed by a teacher when a child has mastered that particular skill. First graders were pulled from regular class for Title I reading and math, which seemed to fragment the instructional program for students needing more consistency and structure. Informal assessments were done through the basal management system in reading. There had been no attempt to formally match the BSAP objectives with the reading or mathematics basals used. Teachers expressed some differences of opinion as to the score below which remediation should occur. Teachers did not seem to use class profiles for determining skill needs for the group. Some teachers were unclear about the proper use of the South

Carolina Word List. A Title I reading teacher had developed BSAP class profiles for all first graders, but had not yet developed one specifically for her students. No instructional materials were observed. There were few materials for teaching on a secondary level found in the English and language arts classrooms. These teachers had very few reading materials in the classrooms. No additional assessment of students' instructional level or specific skill-needs in reading had been used at the high school level by language arts teachers. Former ESAA and Title I math materials were available in one teacher's room, but no such materials were apparent in the other math teacher's classroom. Neither these materials nor th basal tests had been correlated with the BSAP objectives. No new materials had been purchased to help with BSAP remediation. The librarian was unaware of her supporting role in the implementation of the BSAP. She did not have a copy of the state objectives for grades K - 12 nor any other publications related to the BSAP. There was no system established for keeping samples of students' writing work. Teachers were relying on the handwriting book and the english text to provide direction for the writing program.

11. Orangeburg School District #1 - Monitoring was conducted on December 1-2, 1981 by three (3) monitoring team members who visited four (4) schools.

    Positive Findings: All parents were sent notifications about CSAB test results. The district had adopted a policy to insure continuous assessment of students' progress.

    Negative Findings: Teachers were not well informed regarding diagnosis at subskill levels. Correlation of the state objectives and the state adopted textbooks had not been accomplished. There was duplication of activities noted in the state-funded half-day kindergarten and the Title I kindergarten. In the Title I kindergarten program, little emphasis was placed on needed

concrete experiences. Above the third grade level, it appeared that teachers did not have enough instructional materials. High school teachers were somewhat confused as to what records they were required to keep. Other subject area teachers weren't quite sure of their role in the BSAP implementation.

12. Orangeburg School District #4 - Monitoring was conducted on March 2 and 3, 1982 by three (3) team members at three (3) schools.

Positive Findings: Teachers had been provided considerable in-service training by the math, reading, and writing liason network members from the district. A district policy for continuous assessment was available to the team.

Negative Findings: Guidance in the use of record forms and test results had not produced uniform procedures. Some teachers were attempting to remediate a variety of math skills together. Some teachers were using the textbooks as the curriculum guide, assuming that all the BSAP subskills were included. At the primary level, the CSAB was administered to all first graders prior to the opening of school and without regard to the teacher of first grade instruction, negating the benefit of teacher-student interaction during testing. A math guide was available but had not been correlated to the BSAP objectives. A plan to teach all objectives and subskills in math at each grade level was not firm; it appeared to be a goal that would not be fulfilled for some classes. There were considerable differences among Title I teachers regarding the teaching and record-keeping of the program. There was no consistent plan or procedure to ensure each math objective was dealt with in a meaningful way. Some teachers were concentrating on content they considered as basic skills and were not giving emphasis to each of the state identified objectives. On the high school level, the BSAP

implementation was not well defined. Teachers were uncertain about what they are doing with regard to BSAP implementation. This was causing teachers to feel frustrated. Some teachers were using their grade books for BSAP record-keeping. English teachers viewed the BSAP as a separate program. There was no correlation of the textbooks to the BSAP objectives. Instructional materials were lacking.

13. Richland School District #1 - Monitoring was conducted on January 26 - 28, 1982 by nine (9) monitoring team members who visited twenty-four (24) schools in the district. Test results did not seem to be available at the time needed for teachers to adequately plan instruction. Test results were received only a short time before the review was conducted.

    Negative Findings: BSAP test and results were available at the request of parents (only). This was a district decision not to mail out test results. The review noted that teachers were familiar with the BSAP broad objectives, but not the attendant subskills. Many teachers were not utilizing the CSAB test information for planning developmental activities, especially where readiness teachers were providing supplementary instruction. Resources for evaluating subskill progress were needed in many schools. Correlation between the BSAP objectives and the resources used by teachers had taken place, but supplemental activities to replace the activities that did not correlate had not been done. There was little or no evidence of teachers using the BSAP to evaluate their own instructional program. Not all teachers were aware of or utilized the Word List for students' instructional level.

14. Saluda School District - Monitoring was conducted on April 20-21, 1982 by three (3) team members.

    Positive Findings: The area identified by the monitoring team as needing attention has been previously perceived as needing attention by administrators and

supervisory personnel. Teachers openly expressed both positive and negative feelings about the BSAP implementation. The kindergarten was organized into appropriate learning centers with a variety of sensory materials available. A district form used for reporting kindergarten progress was completed three (3) times a year, either reviewed with the parents or mailed to parents unable to come to the school. All parents of children identified as "not ready" through the CSAB test were sent notifications with a letter of explanation. The COPE program was used with first grade children scoring below 88 on the CSAB. The COPE management materials were only used in classrooms where full implementation of the BSAP has been possible. (The COPE program had been correlated with the BSAP objectives.) In the high school two (2) letters were sent to parents - one in the fall before standards were set and one in spring after standards were set. Each English teacher maintained records of students' instructional needs and kept folders of students' writing.

Negative Findings: The record-keeping system in kindergarten was not uniform. Each teacher used a personal system for following children's skill development. Each teacher also maintained a personal system for keeping class profiles of the 18 kindergarten objective areas. Teachers without the assistance of an aide had found full implementation of the BSAP difficult. Some teachers were not aware of the correlation between the COPE program and the BSAP objectives. Grouping of students based on BSAP test results had occured in the upper elementary grades. No organized program of writing was observed. Teachers were not required to maintain a file of students' written compositions. There was a lack of communication between the Title I reading teachers and the regular classroom teachers. Some teachers expressed frustration about a required skills sheet form and

indicated they found it to be not useful in helping them to improve instruction. Teachers at one school had two (2) forms for record-keeping but indicated that no school-wide decision had been made about which of the forms they would be required to maintain. Other subject area teachers were aware of the BSAP objectives, but had made limited efforts to incorporate the objectives into their disciplines. These teachers also indicated they needed help to incorporate the Word List and the BSAP objectives into instruction in their subject areas. The BSAP test scores were not used for planning in the ninth grade.

15. Spartanburg School District #6 - Monitoring was conducted on November 16 - 18, 1981 by five (5) team members who visited eight (8) schools.

Positive Findings: Administrators at the district level and school level had been active in discharging responsibilities for the BSAP implementation. A district policy for continuous assessment had been established and a variety of in-service training had been provided. A major concern of administrators and teachers centered around the amount of time required to get the BSAP in place. The Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery test was administered by each child's current teacher, and the development of readiness skills was being dealt with in those instances where test scores and teacher observation indicated further needs. All parents were sent notifications of the test results. Profile sheets had been distributed to schools and most teachers had reviewed the results and used them for overall planning for instruction. In the majority of classes visited, there was evidence that subskills were being dealt with through instruction.

Negative Findings: Profile sheets from the sixth grade had not been distributed and used by the fifth grade teachers. This would have allowed them to focus on fifth grade prerequisites for the indicated areas of weaknesses.

Several variations in the use of the district's adopted BSAP record-keeping system was noted from class to class and school to school. Methods of evaluating students' writing samples varied from teacher to teacher. The district's record-keeping system did not include an assessment for writing in grades 1 - 5. There appeared to be wide variance in the instructional levels in some reading classes at the middle grade level. Few appropriate materials were observed for the low-level students. A further difficulty was the scheduling of only one hour for reading and language arts. The ninth grade level English classes did not lend themselves to the remediation of reading skills. Remediation of subskills for students with low reading and writing scores at the high school level was apparently minimal.

16. Spartanburg School District #7 - Monitoring was conducted on October 26 - 28, 1981 by five (5) team members visiting eight (8) schools.

Positive Findings: All principals were familiar with the BSAP and their responsibilities. Parents of students scoring below the readiness standards had been sent letters of notification. Small group instruction was observed within some classes. In grades 7 - 9, teachers were beginning to use BSAP test results in planning remediation activities for students with deficiences. It was evident that the communication between regular program teachers and Title I program teachers was effective.

Negative Findings: All teachers visited had excessive records on students. Duplication was occuring between the BSAP forms and the district's record keeping forms. Classes were ability grouped for reading and math at the elementary level. In the kindergarten, informal diagnosis was done as a teacher directed activity. Teachers above the first grade level had

varying degrees of knowledge about the BSAP objectives. Grouping of students for reading was observed with primarily the reading book and paper or pencil activities used for instruction. There was no planned composition program at the early grade levels. Most of the writing activities at this level focused on handwriting. At grades 4 - 6, it was not evident that the holistic scoring procedure was used to correct student writing samples. In grades 7 - 12, instruction observed was primarily total group work, except in Title I, special reading, and remedial classes. At the senior high level, the composition program was in varying degrees of development.

* The chart below shows commonalities among the problem areas found during monitoring for 1981-1982 in each of the districts.

PROBLEM AREAS

	Coordination of classes	Continuous Assessment	Correlation of materials	Diagnosis of sub-skills	Grouping of Students	In-service Training	Instructional Materials	Parent Notifications	Record Keeping	Writing Program Needed
1. Anderson #2			X	X	X	X	X	X		
2. Anderson #3			X	X	X		X		X	
3. Berkeley	X		X			X	X			X
4. Charleston	X		X		X	X	X		X	X
5. Darlington		X	X		X		X		X	X
6. Dillon #3							X		X	
7. Florence #2	X	X		X				X		X
8. Laurens #56				X					X	
9. Marion #1	X		X			X	X		X	X
10. Marion #4	X		X	X			X		X	X
11. Orangeburg #1	X		X	X			X		X	
12. Orangeburg #4			X	X			X		X	
13. Richland #1	X		X	X				X		
14. Saluda	X		X		X	X			X	X
15. Spartanburg #6	X			X			X		X	X
16. Spartanburg #7					X				X	X

STATUS OF BSAP IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Four years and several million dollars later, the BSAP is more or less fully in place, although administrators and teachers are encountering problems in various areas of implementation. After much initial resistance, public educators seem to have willingly accepted the new mandate. The basic skills objectives have been distributed to all school districts and presumably to all teachers. Everyone in the public education business should be aware by now of what is to be taught and what skills will be tested; however, the program still has problems to overcome, as evidenced in the monitoring reports. During the 1981-1982 school year, only 16 school districts were monitored (see Appendix D). The schools in those districts were monitored up through the eighth grade which differs from the previous year of 1980-1981, when 31 school districts were monitored only for the CSAB (readiness test) implementation in the first grade (see Appendix D). Many of the findings from the two years of monitoring show similarities in problems among the districts in implementing the program.

As a result of the monitoring teams' findings, the State Department of Education has directed its efforts to providing suggestions, resources, and in-service training. Except for planned/scheduled training, training will be done by request, and because of constraints on time, money, and personnel, all requests cannot be met. A priority will be to direct as much training as possible at administrators. This will be done in an attempt to involve administrators more in the BSAP implementation so they can better direct their staff in those areas necessary for successful implementation.

A point of interest in regard to BSAP implementation is the extent to which the report evidences an outreach to parents. There is concern about

how schools are responding to the mandate of parent notifications, parent conferences, and the involvement of parents in their child's education. The monitoring reports show that some schools fall short in their responsibilities of notifying parents about their children's test results. The General Assembly recognized the importance of parental involvement in the educational process, and included certain requirements in the legislation (see Appendix E). The requirements are designed to insure that parents are informed of their children's test performance. Additionally, they require that teachers take advantage of the opportunity to appropriately involve parents in the education process. Teachers are encouraged to involve parents in their child's educational program at times and in ways they deem appropriate and beneficial to the student. As a result of this problem, the State Department of Education has provided for each district a "suggested" plan of action in how to report the test results to parents with sample copies of letters (see Appendix F-1 - F-4).

For the 1982-1983 school year, 45 districts are projected to be monitored. Excluding any major diversions, this places a tremendous work load on the Basic Skills Section of the State Department of Education, particularly in light of limited resources resulting from the 4.6% mandated budget-cut. Of the 92 districts to be monitored within the projected three-year period, six (6) will not be monitored and another six (6) will be monitored for a second time because of a Legislative Audit Council's mandate for the State Department of Education to conduct twelve (12) comprehensive reviews of specific school districts in 1982-1983.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS' ASSURANCE FORM
BASIC SKILLS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM
Regulations Appropriate for 1982-83

District _____

	YES	NO
1. All schools in the district participate in the basic skills assessment program as appropriate with reference to the timetable contained in Section 4 of the Act. Section 2 (a).	☐	☐
2. The first grade readiness test is administered to all first grade students (repeaters also) in membership within the first 15 days of school. Section 1 (b) (1) and State Board action of June 8, 1979.	☐	☐
3. The parent(s) or guardian(s) of any student not indicating readiness on the first grade readiness test is:	☐	☐
(a) Notified in writing.	☐	☐
(b) Advised to secure a physical examination for the student.	☐	☐
(c) Provided information about local governmental health services that are available.	☐	☐
This notice is on file in the scholastic record of the student. Section 7 and 1 (b) (2) and State Board action of June 11, 1980.	☐	☐
4. The parent(s) or guardian(s) of students not indicating readiness on the first grade readiness test and not meeting the standard in reading, writing, and mathematics in grades 1, 2, 3, 6, and 8 is provided test information, explanations of deficiencies, and suggestions regarding appropriate assistance that might be given to the student by the parent(s) or guardian(s). Section 2 (f) (2).	☐	☐
5. When requested to do so, the district provides, in writing, test result information of any child to the parent(s) or guardian(s) of that child. Section 2 (f) (1).	☐	☐
6. The district uses results on the first grade readiness test and the reading, writing, and mathematics tests at grades 1, 2, 3, 6, and 8 to help diagnose student deficiencies. Section 2 (d).	☐	☐
7. The district provides appropriate developmental activities for at least all first grade students whose scores on the readiness test indicate they are not ready for formal first grade instruction Section 1 (b) (1).	☐	☐
8. The district provides basic instruction to aid the student in grades 2, 3, 4, 7, and 9 in bringing his reading, writing, and mathematics performance up to the statewide minimum standards as tested in grades 1, 2, 3, 6, and 8.	☐	☐
9. The district has adopted policies to insure that a continuous assessment is made of an individual student's progress in relation to statewide minimum standards established for first grade readiness and reading, writing, and mathematics in grades 1, 2, 3, 6, and 8. Section 2 (b).	☐	☐
10. The district has adopted procedures to insure that statewide objectives in reading, writing, and mathematics are included in the curriculum. (State Board policy).	☐	☐

I certify that the above information is correct.

_____ _____
District Superintendent's Signature Date

SDE23-104-00
(This form becomes obsolete 6/30/83)

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APPENDIX B

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
COLUMBIA 29201

Charlie G. Williams
State Superintendent of Education

DRAFT COPY

Dear :

Section 8 of the Basic Skills Assessment Act mandates that the State Department of Education monitor the implementation of the Basic Skills Program in the school districts of South Carolina. The purpose of this letter is to inform you that the dates of _____, have been selected to conduct the Basic Skills Assessment Program monitoring in _____ School District #_. I request that you notify your staff and school principals of these dates.

_____ of our staff has been assigned to serve as the coordinator for your district's monitoring visit. ___ will contact you or your designee to plan the logistics for our visit. If you desire, we will conduct either or both an entrance and exit conference with you and parties you choose to invite. Please give some consideration to these conferences prior to talking with the coordinator.

To the extent that it is possible, I would like to request that activities such as fire drills, assembly programs, club schedules, etc. not be planned for the period of time the Basic Skills Assessment Program monitoring teams are in your school district. The reason for this request is in the interest of time. Each team must monitor two schools per day. It is most helpful if schools can be on their "regular" schedule. The team will monitor ___ schools in your district.

The Basic Skills staff is looking forward to working with you. It is our hope that this monitoring visit and the resulting report will be of value to you and your staff as you work to implement the Basic Skills Program.

Sincerely,

Lane Trantham, Chief Supervisor
Basic Skills Section

LT:asn

cc Team Coordinator

APPENDIX C

PRINCIPAL'S BSAP INTERVIEW FORM

DISTRICT_____ PRINCIPAL_____

DATE_____ SCHOOL_____

I. Program planning and development with BSAP

A. District policy for continuous assessment including BSAP

B. Provisions for district/school inservice

C. Recordkeeping system (individual, class)

D. Strategies to insure objectives taught K-12

II. First grade readiness testing

A. CSAB administration

1. To all first graders?
2. By 15th day of school?
3. Appropriate conditions?
4. To kindergarten students?

B. Notification of parents

1. Individual report to all parents?
2. Information included
   a. Need for physical?
   b. Availability of health service?
   c. Suggestions for assistance?
3. Other

C. Utilization of test results

1. Program development?
2. Instructional planning?
3. On file?

III. End of year testing

A. Appropriate conditions?

B. Notification of all parents with suggestions for assistance?

C. Utilization of test results

1. Program development?
2. Instructional planning?
3. On file?

IV. BSAP and other resources provided

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KINDERGARTEN

APPENDIX C-2

BSAP INTERVIEW FORM

DATE _____ DISTRICT/ _____ SCHOOL _____

TEACHERS _____

1. Assessment of kindergarten objectives (Interview):

   a. Formal assessment (CSAB or other)

   b. Informal assessment of kindergarten objectives through daily observation

   c. Instructional plan to develop kindergarten objectives

   d. Individual and class (center observation sheets) records used

   e. Parents informed and involved

   f. Utilizing Early Childhood Education in South Carolina and Kangaroo Book

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2. Observation:

   a. Individual, small group. large group

   b. Learning center organization

   c. Appropriate materials

3. Suggestions for Assistance:

GRADE 1
BSAP INTERVIEW FORM

DATE_____ DISTRICT_____ SCHOOL_____

TEACHERS_____

I. Instruction for kindergarten objectives

A. CSAB administration

1. Conditions?

2. Assessment of K objectives not tested?

B. Notification of parents

1. Individual report?

2. Letter?

3. Conferences?

4. Suggestions for assistance?

C. Utilization of test results

1. Plan for developing readiness skills?

2. Use of Rainbow Book and other materials?

3. Record of progress?

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II. Instruction for first grade objectives

A. Instructional plan for first grade objectives?

B. Informal assessment?

C. Instructional resources?

D. BSAP resources?

III. Other?

A. Inservice?

B. Role in program planning?

GRADES 2-12
BSAP INTERVIEW FORM

DATE_____ DISTRICT_____ SCHOOL_____

TEACHERS/GRADES_____

I. Spring test administration

II. Utilization of test results

A. Instructional plans for appropriate levels, subskills?

B. Record(s) of progress?

C. Additional assessments?

D. Instructional materials?

E. BSAP Resources?

F. Awareness of school's instructional needs and plan?

G. Inservice needs?

III. Notification of parents?

A. Individual report to all parents?

B. Letter? Suggestions?

C. Conferences?

D. Other?

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APPENDIX D

APPENDIX D

DISTRICTS MONITORED OR TO BE MONITORED IN

1980-81	1981-82
Allendale	Anderson #2
Bamberg #2	Anderson #3
Barnwell #19	Berkeley
Barnwell #29	Charleston
Calhoun	Darlington
Cherokee	Dillon #3
Chester	Florence #2
Chesterfield	Laurens #56
Clarendon #1	Marion #1
Clarendon #2	Marion #4
Clarendon #3	Orangeburg #1
Colleton	Orangeburg #4
Dillon #1	Richland #1
Dillon #2	Saluda
Dorchester #3	Spartanburg #6
Edgefield	Spartanburg #7
Fairfield	
Florence #4	
Georgetown	
Hampton #2	
Jasper	
Lee	
McCormick	
Marion #2	
Marion #3	
Orangeburg #2	
Orangeburg #6	
Orangeburg #7	
Williamsburg	
York #1	
Marlboro	
TOTAL: 31	16

Revised 7/82

APPENDIX E

APPENDIX E

Reference: 1978 Act 631 (as amended): Section 1(b)(2); Section 2(f)(1)(2); Section 7.

BSAP parental notification and involvement requirements include:

(a) parents of students who do not meet standards must have the test results provided to them in writing and receive appropriate suggestions as to how they can help their children to improve. The notification to parents of children scoring not ready on the CSAB must also advise them to secure a physical examination for their child;

(b) parents of students who do meet standards may request and receive test results; and

(c) a copy of the notification to parents of students who do not meet the standards must be filed in the student's cumulative record.

APPENDIX F

APPENDIX F-1

REPORTING TO PARENTS

ACT 631

Section 2. (f) (1) **"Provide in writing test result information to any parent or guardian of a dependent child when the parent or guardian requests such information."**

Section 7. **"The parents or guardian of any student who does not meet the minimum standards set for any test prescribed in this act shall be notified in writing by the school and such notice shall be filed in the scholastic records of the student concerned."**

When you send home The Student Report supplied by the State Department of Education, the requirements of the law mentioned above should be met. (Parent letter on back of Student Report.)

Section 2. (f) (2) **"Provide test information and explanations of deficiencies to a parent or guardian of a dependent child found to have deficiencies and make suggestions for appropriate assistance to be given to the dependent child by the dependent child's parent or guardian."**

This section of the law should be met if:

The parent and teacher participate in a conference to discuss student's deficiencies and ideas for parental assistance

and/or

A district/school sends with the Student Report suggestions for the parent to assist their child and the parent returns the signed verification form.

However, if after the Student Report has been sent home and the school receives no response from the parent, the school should attempt to contact the parent again. A follow-up communication in the form of a letter, postcard, or logged telephone call will suffice as a reasonable attempt on the part of the school to satisfy the requirements of the law.

SUGGESTED DISTRICT/SCHOOL PLAN OF ACTION

Establish a policy for notification of parents to include:

1. Method of distribution of Student Reports.

2. Method of verification that parents of students scoring below state standard received the Student Report.

3. Method of explaining student deficiencies and making suggestions for assisting students.
   A. Parent/teacher conference.
   B. Attach to Student Report ideas for suggested assistance.

4. Method of follow-up communication for parents of students scoring below state standard --
   A. Letter.
   B. Postcard.
   C. Logged telephone calls.

5. Method of recording parent/teacher contact for students scoring below state standard. In student's scholastic record, place
   A. Copy of Student Report;
   B. Verification of receipt of Student Report;
   C. Conference date and statement (if made);
   D. Follow-up communication (if necessary).

APPENDIX E-2

VERIFICATION OF RECEIPT OF STUDENT REPORT

_____
Date

Name of Student _____

Name of Teacher _____

School _____

Dear Parent,

Please sign and return the following:

I have received the results of the Basic Skills Assessment Program tests which were administered in May 1982.

Parent's Signature _____

Date _____

A conference time can be arranged for you to talk with the teacher. If you would like to have a conference with your child's teacher, please sign below. If you have a preferred date and time, please state. A conference will then be scheduled for you.

Yes, I would like for you to schedule a conference for me on

_____
Date Time

Parent's Signature _____

APPENDIX F-3

FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO PARENT

(SAMPLE #1)

TO: The Parent(s) of (student's name)

FROM:

DATE:

SUBJECT: PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCE

We are sure that you did not receive the postcard that we sent to you with your child's score report on the Basic Skills Assessment Program tests. Because the basic skills of Reading, Writing, and Mathematics are so necessary for your child's future success in school and in life, we would like you to meet with your child's teacher. While there are many things the school can and will do, there are things that you can do at home. For example, we urge you to set aside a regular time each day for school work and let your child know that you consider education to be of great importance.

There are many ways that you and the school can work together to help your child achieve success during his/her school experience. We shall be most happy to share our ideas of specific assistance for your child's improvement. Please call the school (Phone # _____) to set up a time that is convenient to you.

_____
Teacher Signature

APPENDIX F-4

FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO PARENT

(SAMPLE #2)

Dear Parent:

In early September we mailed you the Basic Skills Assessment Program test score report, along with a reply card for your child. This report indicated that (Child's Name) did not meet all the standards, and we requested a conference with you. We have not heard from you in regard to a follow-up conference.

Please allow us to help your child further by meeting with us to plan ways to improve his/her school achievement. You can do this by indicating on the enclosed postcard when you can meet with his/her teacher and returning the postcard to us or calling the school at (School Phone No.).

Your response will be appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Teacher

Enclosure